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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the value system of Cuban students living in the United States, how those systems interface with the school and the home, and how they influence their personalities, behaviors, and family relationships. Eighth-grade students attending a predominantly Spanish private bilingual school were administered a questionnaire, and participated in a group interaction process. The questionnaire covered the areas of cultural values in school and home. Comments from the group interaction process are also listed. The study concludes that students: (1) like the atmosphere of the bicultural school; (2) accept their parents' Latin-American values; (3) feel free to incorporate American cultural elements into their lifestyles; (4) have a high concept of the Cuban lifestyle; and (5) are optimistic about their expectations and futures. The study recommends: (1) a re-testing of the same students in 1979; (2) an expansion of the same study to include older students; (3) a study of Latin-American students attending American schools; and (4) the appropriation of federal funds to establish counseling/research centers to study adjustment problems in Cuban youths. (Author/HLM)

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A study of Factors Affecting Cuban Parent - Child Interaction

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INTRODUCTION

Psychologists, sociologists, and the Dade County community in general are faced with the problems developed in a new generation of Cuban youths that are being raised in an atmosphere of cultural shock. This new generation is constantly striving, looking for a way to cope with the problems that it faces due to the cultural gaps existing between the Spanish and the American communities.

It is apparent that due to the transition from a Latin to an American culture, discrepancies and problems have developed for Cuban parents and their children in general.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

If one delve into the Cuban and American cultures in an effort to make a comparison of the concerns as indicated below, it is obvious that numerous differences in the patterns of behavior and on cultural roles and expectations are drastically different:

Cuban	American
1) Language: Spanish	1) Language: English
2) Dating patterns: include chaperoning.	2) Dating patterns: exclude chaperoning
3) Ethical issues: tend to be more restricted.	3) Ethical issues: tend to be more liberated.
4) Wardrobe: more conventional.	4) Wardrobe: more informal.
5) Family: extended.	5) Family: nuclear.

These cultural differences have been in many cases the cause of a generation gap between the Cuban parents and their children. The Cuban parents have come to this country with their own set of values which differs from the American way of living. Their Cuban children are exposed to these two different cultures throught the home, the community and the school.

Because the students are constantly confronted with these two set of values, the author assumed that the results of this confrontation could possibly be identified by the students through conversations in a group interaction session.

Gonzalez-Reigosa (1975) in a paper dealing with the impact of cultural change on the psychological organization and stability of members of ethnic groups in the USA stated that, "in most cases the acculturation process was in one way or another related to personality disturbance and psychological stress. The differential rate of acculturation within a family unit can also lead to intra-family disruption... The most common source of conflict that can be encountered with an immigrant family is that caused by confrontation of values held by parents and older family members which are derived from the culture of the homeland, and the values held by the children and younger generation that are the product of the formative years spent in American society. The roles and values placed on tradition is often the element that animates the conflict within the family where the culture heritage is different

between the children and parents... The Cuban-American youngsters will find that their parents and other relatives (the extended family still predominates among Cubans) will place demands and impose values upon them which they consider unreasonable, and if accepted, will make them extremely unpopular among their peers."

Consequently, the purpose of this project is to determine how the different value systems faced by the Cuban child in the USA at school and at home influence the child personality and behavior, and his relationship and communication with his parents.

PROCEDURE

To study the seriousness of the implications as indicated in the introduction and background and significance and to obtain more valid and reliable data, the author felt the need to study a large sample of Cuban students. Consequently, on November 24, 1975 the author requested and received permission from the Principal of the Pan American Institute to hold a group interaction session with an eighth grade class of Cuban students. The author feels that it is imperative to note that the Institute is a predominantly Spanish private bilingual school where the students receive instruction in both languages and pertaining to both cultures.

The purpose of the group interaction session was to discuss issues and concerns which dealt with the Latin-American and American cultural differences as experienced by these students, trying to determine the human interaction patterns existing between the children and their parents, as well as the children's reaction to the bi-cultural concerns.

In an effort to follow through with the goal of the project, the researcher developed a questionnaire designed to elicit specific data. The questions were to be used in the group interaction session and as a mechanism to invite or motivate the children to express their opinions and reactions regarding their cultural environment and their parent-children interaction.

To obtain an accurate account of the students responses and their comments, the author requested and received prior approval from the principal and the students to use a tape recorder.

RESULTS

The results reported in this section consist of data collected from the questions and recording.

From the 35 students in the class, 50% were male, 51% were female. Ages ranged from 13 to 14. In a 99% both parents of the students were Latins; i.e., only one student reported to have one American parent. Two (2) students (5.72%) have lived in the USA from 1 to 5 years. Eighteen (18) students (51.43%) have lived in the USA from 6 to 10 years. Fifteen (15) students (42.85%) were born here.

I. SCHOOL

Item 1

Item 1 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on how the students feel about their school--Do they like it? The data collected revealed the following: Thirty-three (94.2%) of the students indicated that they like the school; one (2.9%) of the students indicated that he did not like the school; one (2.9%) of the students indicated that he was undecided.

Question (A) of Item 1 asked the question--Do you like your teachers? The data collected revealed the following: Fourteen (40%) of the students indicated that they liked their teachers; fifteen (43%) of the students were undecided; six (17%) of the students did not respond.

Question (B) asked the question--Do you like the atmosphere prevailing in the school? The data collected revealed the following: thirty-two (91.40%) of the students indicated that they liked the prevailing atmosphere; one (2.9%) indicated that he did not like the prevailing atmosphere; one (2.9%) indicated that he was undecided; one (2.9%) of the students did not respond.

Question (C) asked the question--Do you like your peers? The data collected revealed the following: twenty-five (71.4%) of the students indicated that they liked their peers; seven (20%) of the students indicated that they were undecided; one (2.9%) indicated that he did not like his peers; two (5.7%) did not respond.

Item 2

Item 2 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on whether the students like English and Social Studies classes as much as the Spanish and Cuban History classes. The data collected revealed the following: ten (28.55%) of the students indicated that they did like English and Social Studies classes as much as the Spanish and Cuban History classes;

twenty-four (68.55%) indicated that they did not like English and Social Studies classes as much as the Spanish and Cuban History classes; one (2.9%) did not respond.

Question (A) of item 2 asked the question--Do you feel that both English and Social Studies classes and Spanish and Cuban History classes are necessary? The data collected revealed the following: twenty-four (68.55%) of the students indicated yes; eight (22.85%) indicated no; three (8.6%) of the students were undecided.

Item 3

Item 3 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on the English and Spanish proficiency of the students. The data collected revealed the following: thirty-five (100%) of the students indicated that they felt confortable speaking Spanish; thirty (85.7%) indicated that they felt comfortable speaking English; five (14.3%) indicated that they did not feel confortable speaking English.

Item 4

Item 4 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on--Whether or not the students would rather attend a predominantly American school. The data collected revealed the following: three (8.58%) of the students indicated that they would rather attend a predominantly American school; thirty-two (91.42%) of the students indicated that they would rather not attend a predominantly American school.

II. HOME & CULTURAL VALUES

Item 1

Item 1 of section II on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on how the students feel about dating. --would they like having a chaperon? The data collected revealed the following: seventeen (48.58%) of the students indicated that they prefer to have a chaperon; eighteen (51.42%) of the estudents indicated that they would not like to have a chaperon.

Question (A) asked the question--Would your parents insist on your having a chaperon? The data collected revealed the following: twenty-four (68.57%) of the students indicated that their parents would insist that they have a chaperon; nine (25.7.%) of the students indicated that their parents would not insist that they have a chaperon; two (5.71%) of the students were not sure.

Item 2

Item 2 of section II on the questionnaire was designed to gather information as to whether or not the students liked the way they dressed. The data collected revealed the following: thirty-three (94.28%) of the students indicated that they like the way they dress; two (5.71%) of the students indicated that they did not like the way they dress.

Question (A) of item 2 asked the question--Do your parents agree with the way you dress? The data collected revealed the following: thirty-three (94.28%) of the students indicated that their parents agreed with the way they dressed; two (5.71%) of the students indicated that their parents did not agree with the way they dressed.

Item 3

Item 3 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information as to whether or not the students feel free to speak English around their parents, even if they do not understand the language. The data collected revealed the following: thirty (85.7%) of the students indicated that they felt free to speak English around their parents, even if they did not understand the language; five (14.3%) of the students indicated that they did not feel free to do so.

Item 4

Item 4 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on whether or not the students have many American friends. The data collected revealed the following: nine (25.71%) of the students indicated that they have many American friends; twenty-four (68.57%) of the students indicated that they did not have many American friends; two (5.71%) of the students were not sure.

Item 5

Item 5 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on whether or not the students would like to have more American friends. The data collected revealed the following: twenty-one (60%) of the students indicated that they would like to have more American friends; twelve (34.29%) of the students indicated that they would not like to have more American friends; two (5.71%) of the students were not sure.

Item 6

Item 6 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information as to whether or not the students feel free to invite their American friends to their home, parties etc. The data collected revealed the following: thirty-one (88.58%) of the students indicated that they felt free to invite their American friends to their home, parties etc.; four (11.42%) of the students indicated that they did not feel free to do so.

Item 7

Item 7 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information as to whether or not the students feel that their parents' values are appropriate and up-to-date according to our times. The data collected indicated the following: twenty-three (65.7%) of the students indicated that they feel their parents' values are appropriate and up-to-date according to our times; twelve (34.3%) of the students indicated that they feel their parents' values are not appropriate and up-to-date according to our time.

Item 8

Item 8 on the questionnaire was designed to gather information on whether the students feel there are any big differences between their ideas and those of their parents. The data collected revealed the following: twenty-four (68.58%) of the students indicated that they felt there were no big differences between their ideas and those of their parents; eleven (31.42%) of the students felt that there were big differences between their ideas and those of their parents.

Following are some of th e students comments and/or reactions recorded during the Magic Circle (group interaction session):

"I prefere to speak English because I have been speaking English longer than Spanish."

"I prefer to speak Spanish rather than English because I comprehend better and speak faster."

"I came to this country ten years ago. I remember nothing of Spanish so I prefer to speak English."

"I prefer to speak English because I make to many mistakes speaking Spanish."

"I prefer Cuban way of living because it is more decent."

"Cubans live cleaner."

"I prefer Cuban way of living because that is the way I have been grown up."

"I like Cuban way of living but I would like to have more freedom, like in the American way of living."

"We do not think like the old people; they are old fashioned. They worry too much about everything."

"Here it is necessary to know English and Spanish in order to get a good job."

"The more languages you know, the better."

When asked whether they wanted to continue studing, all the students answered at once: "Yeeees!" They also expressed their hopes to have a successful future.

CONCLUSIONS

The data collected through the list of questions and the comments of the students reveals that:

1. Although most of the students have lived in the USA for more than 10 years or were born here, they like the school and its predominantly Spanish oriented atmosphere. Most of them feel comfortable speaking both English and Spanish, and feel it is necessary to know about American culture as much as about Cuban culture.

2. Although some discrepancies seem to exist between the children and their parents' values like in the case of dating including chaperoning, most students show an agreement or acceptance of their parents' Latin-American values. They do not believe that there is much difference between their own ideas and their parents ideas. They feel free to incorporate American cultural elements to their Latin-

American cultural and social activities, even in the presence of their parents. They seem to have a high concept of the Cuban way of living, and are optimistic about their expectations and their future.

Consequently, it is obvious that at this stage these students do not suffer from the consequences of cultural shock and generation gap that cause dysfunctional behavior and parent-child disruptive interaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the data presented in this project the author recommends the following:

1. That this same group of students should be interviewed again in 1979 at which time they will have reached the age 17 - 19.

2. That this study should be continued and include a larger random sample of students ranging from age 15 - 18.

3. That this study should be conducted including a random sample of Latin-American students attending a predominantly American school.

4. That federal funds should be appropriated to set up counseling and research centers where the problem of adjust-

ment faced by Cuban youths and other immigrants could be studied more deeply and effectively.

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